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PRINCIPLES OF REVISION OF A COURSE OF STUDY APPLIED TO GEOGRAPHY

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In an attempt to correct an overcrowded curriculum, there are at least three ways in which the problem may be attacked.

I. Elimination of unnecessary subject-matter (A) through careful attention to the aims of the course, and (B) by the presentation of subject-matter in the form of problems, thereby providing for something more than a *mere listing of facts*, and automatically limiting the exploration of relatively unimportant bypaths.

II. Such taking account of relations between various elements of the subject-matter as will provide for right *cumulative effect*. That is to say, wherever possible, the first thing taught should (through grade after grade) lead up to, and reinforce later material. The whole should also be knit together by *review problems* which present new aspects of old material, and serve as drills and reviews of important points.

III. Integration of subjects, in other words cutting down the number of subjects because of recognition of the fact that phases of the same subject have crept into the curriculum under various names, and can be put together so that the same results may be obtained with less skipping from subject to subject.

The following course in "Environment" has been prepared as an attempt to apply these principles. This course is meant to take the place of elementary science, nature-study, school gardening, and geography of the first three grades, and to merge into the geography of the fourth grade (see fourth-grade outline). Geography is regarded as "relation of the earth to life," and the early grades are devoted to the gathering of facts (earth facts and life facts), which are to be related causally in later grades (beginning with real home geography in fourth grade) where the child is more mature. Some spatial relations are dealt with in each grade.

TENTATIVE COURSE OF STUDY IN ENVIRONMENT
TO TAKE THE PLACE OF REGULAR COURSE IN NATURE-STUDY, ELEMENTARY
SCIENCE, SCHOOL GARDENING, AND GEOGRAPHY, IN THE STATE
NORMAL SCHOOL AT WINONA, MINN.

GRADE I

I. *Natural environment.*

Study trees, because (1) there are plenty within easy reach on our campus, (2) they are large and present easily comprehended gross features, (3) they are stationary and easily observed again and again, and for relatively long periods (N.B.—These considerations overbalance the fact that children's interests are more primarily in moving animal life.)

The problem in regard to trees is one of *recognition and appreciation* only.

In animal life, work for recognition of such common animals as will be likely to be met with in the reading or in the child's own restricted experience. Most of the children will be familiar with many of these, but some will be ignorant of a part of the last, and there should be a general checking up, covering such creatures as cats, dogs, chickens, rabbits, squirrels, foxes, cows and calves, horses and colts, sheep, turtles, ants, grasshoppers, butterflies, crickets, bees, etc.

Children in this grade should begin to learn how to care for a canary and for plants, but should not be given full care and responsibility. Assistance should be permitted and encouraged, attention being drawn to the details of what must be done.

Do gardening in order that the children may see *many things grow*, in order that they may get the concept that things do grow—that they come from seeds planted in the ground and develop through the various stages to maturity. Note all kinds of plant life—vegetables, cereals, flowers, weeds—but for the above-mentioned purpose specifically.

Cultivate a general appreciative observation of the whole environment as opportunity presents itself, but do *specific* work as outlined above.

In none of the work suggested for this grade should scientific analysis be expected. Let the child recognize by picking out the characteristics which appeal to him.

II. *Artificial environment.*

Study three stores: (1) dry goods, (2) meat market, (3) grocery. Find out definitely what is kept in each store. Notice particular things. Learn generalization "store."

Study local *home*. Make this study from the *fact* side.

To aid in future geography work give some attention to the spatial relation of direction and distance. Let the children learn the directions by actual field work (view from top of building or similar device). Do not deal with maps or symbols of other kinds at this point.

GRADE II

I. *Natural environment.*

Recognition and appreciation of local flowers and shrubs.

Review problem: To find and recognize away from the campus the trees we learned to know on the campus last year. Tell how we know them. (Still let the child be largely independent as to the distinguishing features he selects.)

Gardening (spring): Review and clinch main features of fall visit to farm (see below).

Problem: To recognize what the farmer plants, and actually to plant it, and to recognize it when it grows.

Distinction between weeds and valuable garden plants. What animals and insects do we discover are helpful to our gardens, and what are harmful? Recognition of what common animals of the environment are domestic and what are wild.

Appreciation as in Grade I.

II. *Artificial environment.*

Other local stores than those studied in first grade. Recognize and tell what these stores have for the home, and what they get from the farm.

Visit the farm, familiarizing the children with farm conditions, becoming at home on the farm, wearing off strangeness, recognizing fields, animals, housing, fruits, grains, etc.

(Manual-training course should make application of all of this in construction work, etc.)

Transportation: Recognition of modes of getting from farm to town and about town.

Distinction between domestic and wild birds: Care for a bird in the schoolroom.

Continue first-grade work in direction and distance, but in field work only, without relation to maps or diagrams.

GRADE III

I. *Natural environment.*

Recognition and appreciation of birds.

Review problem: What kinds of trees, flowers, and shrubs did we see while looking for birds?

What makes an animal a good domestic animal?

How can our domestic animals take care of themselves, and how can we help to take care of them?

What kinds of flowers and weeds have seeds that are good food for birds?

Do the birds all eat the same kind of seeds? Of insects?

What birds are helpful to our gardens? For what other reasons do we like birds? How can we help them? Kodak-hunting vs. gun-hunting.

Gardening (fall): Harvesting of normal department spring garden. Compare what was seen on the farm with what was seen in the school garden.

Care of house plants (winter) and planting of bulbs: One motive—to have Easter lilies.

II. *Artificial environment.*

Factories of Winona—Problems: What do they make? What raw materials do they use? Where do the raw materials come from? What are the uses of the products? How many of them come into our homes direct from the factory, and how many through the stores?

N.B.—Work with spatial relations of distance and direction should be continued in this grade, but still through actual experience, instead of through the medium of maps or diagrams. The direction of the farm from the school, etc., suggest the character of the available material. Pointing in various directions; walking in various directions; using names north, south, east, and west until they are very familiar in actual practice—all of this should be woven in until it is too familiar to allow the child to become confused.

GRADE IV

Beginning with this grade the course should be definitely called *geography*, but should include the necessary elements of the other subjects, no subject called elementary science, nature-study, or school gardening being put upon the program separately. The first three grades have been collecting *facts*—facts about the *earth*, and facts about *life*. They are in the fourth grade to begin to relate those facts into the science of geography, geography being regarded as the “relation of earth to life.” These relations are of course mainly *causal*. The basis for geography is another relation—the spatial. These spatial relations are (as already provided in this course) to be emphasized in each one of the first three grades, and to be summed up and applied to maps and charts in the latter part of the fourth grade now under discussion (see below).

Home geography: 6 months. Use Dodge’s *Home Geography* outline as found in his first book, but treat the subjects as treated in McMurry’s discussion. (Tarr and McMurry’s *Geography*.)

4 B Grade. Do topics 1 to 10 inclusive, omitting topic 4.

4 A Grade. Do remaining topics in Dodge, *Home Geography* outline, and spend three months on *Homes in other Lands*, as an introduction to a first *extensive* view of the “world as a whole,” going from *consequence* to *cause*. Make this study of homes by means of a series of type studies, gathering the facts which will tend to build up in the child’s mind an idea of the heat belts, so that he has roughly blocked out in his mind the “world as a whole” divided into zones. Use *Seven Little Sisters* and *Each and All*, in so far as they are applicable to this work.

Map study: Map study should come *after* the child has something to map. Hence, as has been intimated in previous grades, it would be left until the study of home geography in the fourth grade has gone far enough to give the child at least an elementary need for symbols of geographic areas. But

the fact that his necessity does appear should be recognized, and along with it the other fact that it takes very careful initiation into the use of the symbol in order to be sure that it does not supplant the real thing, but *only comes to stand for the real thing*.

Spatial relations having been well cared for in the preceding grades, this knowledge can be relied upon as an aid in the understanding of the map idea. Directions on the map should be developed first by plots of ground used to represent larger areas, then by sketches on paper made by laying the paper upon which a sketch is to be made flat on the floor, where the real directions may be observed and marked. Hang on north wall. Afterward, the simple details may be filled in as becomes necessary or desirable. Do not give to the child, at first, maps completed by someone else and ask him to interpret them, but stimulate and encourage him to make maps for himself, summing up his knowledge of home geography relations. Some of the gross theory of drawing to a scale will need to be taught. Teach the child to see the map as a symbol of a reality (which reality at this point is largely within his own experience).

Credit for valuable constructive criticism of this course is due to the critic teachers of the Winona Normal School.